



## Excavation of Diamond | Madhya Pradesh | 19 Nov 2024

### Why in News?

Recently, a farmer and his associates have discovered a valuable [diamond](#), weighing 7.44 carats, in the **Panna district of Madhya Pradesh**.

### Key Points

#### ▪ About Diamond:

- **Diamond**, an **allotrope of [carbon](#)**, is the **hardest naturally occurring** substance on Earth.
- Formed in the [Earth's mantle](#) and brought to the surface through [volcanic activity](#), it is found in volcanic landforms like [dykes and sills](#).
- Uses:
  - In jewelry, metal polishing, gem cutting, and industrial applications such as cutting edges for drills.
- **Diamond Rich Locations in India:**
  - The **Panna belt (Madhya Pradesh)**, **Wajrakarur Kimberlite field**, and the [Krishna River basin \(Andhra Pradesh\)](#).
  - The **cutting and polishing industry** is centered in **Surat, Navsari, Ahmedabad, and Palampur**.
- **Leading Producers:**
  - Russia, Botswana, Canada, Australia, South Africa, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

#### ▪ Panna's Diamond Industry:

- **Panna** has been a [diamond mining center](#) for centuries.
- The district's diamond deposits have **dwindled due to over-mining**, making large discoveries rare.
- Mining serves as an alternative income source for the **largely tribal population**, with modest daily earnings of **Rs 250-300**.

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## Diamond Industry in India

- India is the **world's largest cutting and polishing center for diamonds**, accounting for over 90% of polished diamond manufacturing globally.
  - According to Indian Minerals Yearbook 2019, diamond fields of India are grouped into four regions:
    - Central Indian tract of **Madhya Pradesh**, comprising Panna belt.
    - South Indian tract of **Andhra Pradesh**, comprising parts of Anantapur, Kadapa, Guntur, Krishna, Mahabubnagar and Kurnool districts.
    - Behradin-Kodavali area in Raipur district and Tokapal, Dugapal, etc. areas in Bastar district of **Chhattisgarh**.
    - Eastern Indian tract mostly of **Odisha**, lying between [Mahanadi](#) and [Godavari valleys](#).

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## BRO Clears Snow at Zojila Pass | Jammu & Kashmir | 19 Nov 2024

### Why in News?

Recently, the [Border Roads Organization \(BRO\)](#) conducted a snow clearance operation at [Zojila Pass](#), following heavy [snowfall](#), to restore connectivity and ensure safe travel in the area.

### Key Points

- The Machil sector in **Kupwara district** experienced **fresh snowfall**, adding to the region's scenic beauty.
- **Zoji La Pass:**
  - Zoji La is a **high mountain pass located in the [Kargil district of Ladakh](#)**.
  - The pass links **Leh and Srinagar** and provides an important link between **Union Territories of Ladakh and Kashmir**.

- Zoji La pass remains closed during winters due to heavy snowfall, **cutting off Ladakh region from Kashmir.**
- In 2018, the **Zoji La tunnel project was launched.** The **tunnel is Asia's longest and strategic bi-directional tunnel,** which will provide all-weather connectivity between **Srinagar, Kargil and Leh.**

# MAJOR PASSES IN INDIA

**FACTS**

- **Umling La pass** located in Eastern Ladakh has recently become the world's highest motorable pass (Project Himank).
- **Lipu Lekh Pass** is located close to the **tri junction of Uttarakhand (India), China and Nepal.**
- **Nathu La (Sikkim)** is situated on the **Indo-Tibetan border.** It is **one of the three open trading passes** between India and China (other two: **Shipki La and Lipu Lekh Pass**).
- **Naku La,** located in Sikkim, was recently in news due to the **Indo-China face-off along the LAC at the pass.**
- **Zoji La** links Leh with Srinagar and is known as the "**Mountain Pass of Blizzards**". The Zojila tunnel is **Asia's longest tunnel.**
- **Dungri La (or Mana) Pass** connects India and Tibet. It is located in the **Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve** of the Zaskar mountain range (Uttarakhand). Even Indian nationals **need prior permits from the Army** to travel through this pass.
- **Rohtang Pass** (Himachal Pradesh) is situated in the **Pir Panjal Range** of the great Himalayas and connects **Kullu Valley with Lahaul and Spiti Valleys.**
- The widest gap of Western Ghats is at **Palakkad (or Pal Ghat)** in Kerala adjoining Tamil Nadu.

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## Border Roads Organisation (BRO)

- BRO was **conceived and raised in 1960** by [Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru](#) for coordinating the **speedy development of a network of roads in the North and the North Eastern border regions** of the country.
- It works under the **administrative control of the Ministry of Defence.**
- It has diversified into a large spectrum of construction and development works **comprising airfields, building projects, defence works and tunneling** and has endeared itself to the people.

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# Saffron Production Declines in Kashmir Valley | Jammu & Kashmir | 19 Nov 2024

## Why in News?

The [Kashmir Valley](#) has experienced a notable **decline in production of saffron** due to insufficient rainfall.

- The harvest, traditionally **carried out from mid-October to November**, is primarily concentrated in **South Kashmir's Pampore**, famously known as the "[Saffron Bowl of Kashmir](#)."

## Key Points

- **Rainfall Deficit in Kashmir:**
  - Srinagar meteorological department reported a 79% **rainfall deficit** from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 14<sup>th</sup> November 2024, following a 26% deficit during the monsoon, **severely affecting agriculture**, including saffron.
- **Government Initiatives:**
  - The [National Mission on Saffron \(NMS\)](#), launched in 2010-11, **aims to address challenges in saffron cultivation**.
  - In **2020**, [Kashmiri saffron received the Geographical Indication \(GI\) tag](#), with efforts underway to position it as a globally recognized brand.
- **Farmers' Demands:**
  - Farmers emphasize the need for operational borewells and enhanced funding under NMS to ensure sustainable saffron cultivation and address ongoing challenges.
- **Saffron:**
  - Saffron is a **plant whose dried stigmas (thread-like parts of the flower)** are used to make **saffron spice**.
  - Saffron cultivation is believed to **have been introduced in Kashmir by Central Asian immigrants** around the 1<sup>st</sup> Century BCE.
  - It has been **associated with traditional Kashmiri cuisine** and represents the rich cultural heritage of the region.
  - It is a **very precious and costly product**.
  - In ancient Sanskrit literature, **Saffron is referred to as 'Bahukam'**.
  - It is cultivated and harvested in the Karewa (highlands) of Jammu and Kashmir.
  - **Types:**
    - There are **three types** of saffron available in Kashmir **Lachha Saffron, Mongra Saffron and Guchhi Saffron**.
  - **Importance:**
    - It **rejuvenates health and is used in cosmetics** and for medicinal purposes.
    - It has been associated with traditional Kashmiri cuisine and **represents the rich cultural heritage of the region**.

## Geographical Indication (GI) Tag

- A GI tag is a **name or sign used on certain products** that correspond to a specific geographical location or origin.
- The GI tag ensures that only the **authorised users or those residing in the geographical territory** are allowed to use the popular product name.
  - It also protects the product from being copied or imitated by others.
- A registered GI is **valid for 10 years**.
- GI registration is overseen by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.

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# Rajasthan Questions Findings on Parsa Mine Clearance | Rajasthan | 19 Nov 2024

## Why in News?

Recently, **Rajasthan Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Limited (RRVUNL)** has questioned the legitimacy of a report by the [Chhattisgarh State Scheduled Tribes Commission \(CSSTC\)](#), which found **irregularities in environmental clearances** for the **Parsa coal mine** in the State's Surguja region.

- The **Parsa coal block** is located in the **north central part of the [Hasdo-Arand](#)**.

## Key Points

- **Earlier Findings:**
  - According to RRVUNL, in 2023 the **CSSTC, set aside allegations regarding the Parsa mine** following a detailed inquiry by the Surguja district administration.
  - In 2024, The Commission recommended **canceling forest clearances for the Parsa mine**, alleging they were obtained using forged gram sabha consent documents.
  - RRVUNL countered that the [gram sabha](#) approval issue is under [judicial review](#), with no adverse court observations on alleged irregularities.
- **Role of RRVUNL and Adani Group:**
  - The **Parsa coal mine, allotted to RRVUNL**, is developed and operated by the Adani Group, despite ongoing opposition from activists and sections of local communities.
- **Legitimacy of the Report:**
  - RRVUNL questioned the Commission's report, and stated that the report was based on inputs from a small group of individuals, despite the issue involving thousands of local stakeholders.
- **About Chhattisgarh State Scheduled Tribes Commission:**
  - The Chhattisgarh government **formed the Tribal Advisory Council to recommend policies related to [Scheduled Tribes](#)**.
    - Some of the tribes in Chhattisgarh include the [Gonds](#) of Bastar, [Baiga](#) tribes, Pahari korwa tribes, Abhuj Maria, Bison Horn Maria, [Muria](#), Halbaa, Birhor's tribes, Bhatra, and Dhurvaa.
  - The **Chief Minister** of Chhattisgarh is the **Chairman of the Council**, and the Minister of Tribal and Scheduled Caste Development Department is a member.

## Hasdeo Arand Forest

- Hasdeo Arand, a sprawling forest in the **northern part of Chhattisgarh is known for its biodiversity and its coal deposits**.
- The forest falls under **Korba, Sujapur and Surguja districts** with significant tribal population.
- The **Hasdeo river, a tributary of [Mahanadi](#)**, flows through it.
- Hasdeo Arand is the **largest un-fragmented forest in Central India consisting of pristine Sal (*Shorea robusta*) and teak forests**.
- It is a **noted migratory corridor** and has a significant **presence of [elephants](#)**.



## 56th Tiger Reserve in Chhattisgarh | Chhattisgarh | 19 Nov 2024

### Why in News?

Recently, [Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Wildlife Sanctuary](#) in Chhattisgarh has officially been declared as the **56<sup>th</sup> Tiger Reserve** of the country.

### Key Points

- **About Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve:**
  - The Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve spans from **Manendragarh-Chirmiri-Bharatpur, Korea, Surajpur, and Balrampur districts of Chhattisgarh.**
  - Total area is **2,829.38 sq. km**, with core tiger habitat of 2,049.2 sq. km and buffer zone 780.15 sq. km.
  - It is the **third-largest tiger reserve in India**, after [Nagarjunasagar-Srisaillam in Andhra Pradesh](#) and [Manas in Assam](#).
- **Conservation and Connectivity:**
  - It forms a landscape complex of approximately 4,500 sq. km with the [Sanjay Dubri Tiger Reserve](#) in Madhya Pradesh.
  - It is connected to [Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh](#) in the west and [Palamau Tiger Reserve, Jharkhand](#) in the east.
- **Ecological and Faunal Diversity:**
  - Located in the [Chota Nagpur plateau](#) and partly in the **Baghelkhand plateau**, the reserve features diverse terrains, dense forests, streams, and rivers, providing critical [tiger](#) habitats.

- **Zoological Survey of India documented 753 species:**
  - 365 invertebrates (mainly insects).
  - 388 vertebrates, including 230 bird species and 55 mammal species, several of which are threatened.
- Chhattisgarh now hosts **four tiger reserves**, enhancing tiger conservation efforts under [National Tiger Conservation Authority \(NTCA\) Project Tiger](#) initiative.

## National Parks & Sanctuaries of Chhattisgarh



## Dhudmaras Village | Chhattisgarh | 19 Nov 2024

### Why in News?

Dhudmaras, a village in Chhattisgarh's Bastar district, has been selected to **participate in the Best Tourism Village Upgrade Programme (BTVUP)** under the **United Nations Tourism for Rural Development Programme (UNTRDP)** by the [UN World Tourism Organisation \(UNWTO\)](#).

- This recognition marks its potential as a hub for [eco-tourism](#) and sustainable development.

### Key Points

- **Dhudmaras Village:**
  - Located in [Kanger Valley National Park \(KVNP\)](#), is surrounded by dense forests, the **Kanger River**, and rich biodiversity, making it a prime eco-tourism destination.
    - KVNP is named after the Kanger River, which flows through it. It was designated as a **national park in 1982**.
    - KVNP is home to three notable caves **Kutumbasar, Kailash and Dandak** famous for their **stalagmites** (mineral formations that rise from the floor of a cave) and **stalactites** (mineral formations that hang from the ceiling of a cave).
    - The park is dominated by **Sal, Teak, and Bamboo**, forming a **moist deciduous forest**.

- It is home to the Dhurwa Tribe, part of the [Gond Tribe](#), speak Paarji, a **Gond dialect**. Their lifestyle is closely tied to nature, relying on forests and natural resources for sustenance.
- **Recognition and Support:**
  - As part of the UNWTO's initiative under the BTVUP, Dhudmaras will now receive **assistance to enhance areas like economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, and tourism development**, ensuring long-term growth.
- **UN Tourism for Rural Development Programme:**
  - About:
    - UNTRDP promotes **development, inclusion, and innovation** in rural areas through tourism, aiming to combat depopulation and encourage sustainable practices.
  - **Evaluation Criteria:**
    - Villages participating in the program are **evaluated under nine key areas**, which include cultural and natural resources, economic and social sustainability, tourism development, and infrastructure, among others.
      - This evaluation ensures that the selected villages meet standards of **sustainability, inclusiveness, and governance**.

## United Nations World Tourism Organisation

- The UNWTO, established in 1975 and headquartered in **Madrid, Spain**, promotes responsible, sustainable, and accessible tourism.
- **It has 159 member countries, including India**, it serves as a global forum for tourism policy, advocates the [Global Code of Ethics for Tourism](#), and aligns tourism with the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).
  - **Target 8.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** focuses on promoting sustainable tourism that creates jobs and preserves local culture and products.

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